
This publication combines two conferences, both purportedly relating to the topic of its title; which is slightly surprising because Montaigne is not even mentioned in two of the nineteen contributions, Michele Ciliberto on Niccolò Machiavelli and Simonetta Bassi on Giordano Bruno. Among the rest, particular trends are discernible, underscored by the tripartite division of the volume itself: political parties, lessons of the civil war, and interlocutors. Following a thoughtful editorial Introduction, Jean Balsamo and Frank Lestringant launch the proceedings with complementary analyses of Montaigne’s anti-Protestantism; Lestringant’s chapter partly overlaps with Celso Martins Azar Filho’s on the notion of reformation in the Essais. Several contributions discuss Montaigne’s political position, which Alexandre Tarrête describes in terms of neutrality, comparing the essayist with Jean Bodin and Justus Lipsius, whereas Gaia Anselmo and, later, Philippe Desan prefer Montaigne’s own term, ‘mestis’. To these the late Arlette Jouanna adds a fine reflection about the essayist’s political balancing act, showing how and why he managed to hold on to Protestant friends without fuelling suspicions of treachery to the Royalist cause. Nicola Panichi, contrariwise, finds him separating theology and philosophy in reaction to the Roman censors’ criticisms of the notably Protestant or ‘heretical’ writers, works, and beliefs in his writings. Meanwhile, Alain Legros, expanding work already published about the absence of any mention of St Bartholomew’s Day in Montaigne’s personal copy of Beuther (and those of other contemporaries), considers ideas of massacre and carnage in the Essais before re-examining ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’. Other contributions stress the social and moral dimensions of Montaigne’s politics. Education is presented as a bulwark against violence (Federico Baglivo) or as a means to facilitate human interaction, even in civil wars (Douglas I. Thompson, in a wide-ranging study). On the ethical side, Baglivo investigates the essayist’s moderation, Thierry Gontier his ‘liberalism’, and Véronique Ferrer his ‘sante’ and ‘gaieté’, which she sees as a humanist antidote to the barbarity of his times; Rosanna Gorris-Camos’s well-documented chapter illustrates ideas of tolerance and therapy. A further set of contributions considers Montaigne’s interlocutors and influences. Italian presence in the Essais features quite extensively and is touched on by Panichi, Thompson, and Gontier, as well as Gorris-Camos. Among non-Italians, Sébastien Castellion, already mentioned in Gorris-Camos, is given individual treatment by Marco Sgratoni. In a more specific vein, Renzo Ragghianti and Desan take Montaigne and the law as their topic. Desan, in one of two contributions on the influence of Étienne de La Boétie, situates the essayist’s changing attitude towards the law in respect of the Discours de la servitude volontaire and the Mémoire touchant l’édit de janvier 1562, while Olivier Millet, echoing the religious themes of the volume’s opening pages, restates his argument that Montaigne’s letter on the death of La Boétie is an example of modern Catholicism impervious to the trappings of traditional devotion. Supplementing rather than replacing
established studies of Montaigne and the Wars of Religion, this publication offers, all in all, a well-rounded picture of the historical, political, philosophical, theological, ethical, and occasionally literary strands in the essayist’s thinking about his turbulent age.

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